

DAP CASE STUDY

OVERVIEW

Thomas was referred to the programme on 03/05/2025 by Children's Services following a referral made by the school attended by his children. This referral was initiated after the children's mother contacted the school and disclosed ongoing difficulties in her relationship with Thomas (not their real name), which the children had been exposed to. She expressed concerns regarding the potential impact of these experiences on the children's wellbeing.

During the initial assessment and early sessions, Thomas presented as guarded and provided limited detail regarding his behaviour within the family home, often attributing responsibility to his wife. Several concerning comments were made throughout the assessment process; however, Thomas consistently stated that he wished to engage with the programme, expressing that he was "willing to be involved to make things better."

In light of concerns raised by the family social worker regarding the potential risk of honour-based violence, a cautious and considered approach was taken when introducing challenge in the early stages of work with Thomas. Establishing trust was prioritised in order to support Thomas in feeling safe to explore his beliefs, behaviours, and family dynamics more openly.

There were no barriers to Thomas's attendance. Sessions were scheduled on his day off work (Friday mornings), which also enabled him to attend mosque in the afternoons. It was identified early in the work that Thomas experienced difficulties articulating himself, frequently providing lengthy responses or using hypothetical scenarios rather than answering questions directly. Recognising this communication style informed the approach taken in sessions. Additional time was allocated to ensure Thomas did not feel rushed, and summaries and reflective statements were regularly used to clarify and confirm understanding of the points he was attempting to convey.

SOLUTION

Over the course of the 11 sessions completed to date, positive changes have been observed in Thomas's attitude, presentation, and thought processes. As the therapeutic relationship developed, Thomas became increasingly comfortable engaging in sessions, including discussions around sensitive and complex topics. He began to openly explore his traditional family belief systems and the challenges he experienced in managing his emotions when his beliefs differed from those of his family.

As this work progressed, Thomas's motivation to make positive changes appeared increasingly authentic. He demonstrated growing insight into the impact of controlling his wife's behaviour and instead began to recognise the importance of collaboration and co-parenting in the best interests of their children. During a session check-in, Thomas shared that "no matter what has happened in the past, I can't take it back, we just need to put it aside for the kids".

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Throughout the programme, I have supported Thomas to identify and challenge unhelpful thought patterns in relation to others and their perceived intentions. During the early sessions, Thomas reported a tendency to ruminate and overanalyse situations in which he felt upset by others' words or actions, often assuming negative intent. This pattern of thinking frequently contributed to increased emotional distress.

Over time, Thomas demonstrated an improved ability to manage these unhelpful thought processes and began to develop acceptance of uncertainty, recognising that seeking definitive explanations for others' behaviour was not necessary and often exacerbated his emotional responses. During the check-in for session 4, Thomas shared that "The whole scenario between me and my ex-partner has changed things. I was only stuck with why, and now I have developed all of these answers in my head that, it is what it is. Just let it go. The more I hold onto this, the consequences are going to be far worse than what they are at the moment, for me, my health, the kids, her and her family".

In session 7, the focus was on developing perspective-taking skills. During this session, Thomas demonstrated a significant moment of insight when reflecting on his wife's perspective and the potential impact of his behaviours on her. Through a structured perspective-taking exercise, Thomas identified that *"I got angry previously because I thought she put negative things into my kids' brain, which I heard from my daughter a few times, but now thinking about it, she probably wanted to say those things to me but she couldn't because I wasn't giving her the space or time to. I thought if I gave her the time, she would realise my side. But now I think if I gave her more time to speak about it and not get angry, but stayed calm, things would have been different. Thinking negatively has brought me to the place where I am today... I think I should apologise to her for my mistakes. For the kids' sake, I will say that to her...if we keep using bad words and keep attacking each other, things won't move forward. Nothing is going to heal. When I speak to her next time, I think it will be a good idea for us if I can say it to her. It will make things better...I have always accused her of not letting go of her ego, but me not apologising means I have more ego than her. It's a shame really. I have ruined her life to be honest. I've never given her the time she deserved or the space she wanted. I never let her open up"*.

Thomas has begun to demonstrate meaningful positive change and consistently engages openly in sessions when discussing challenging situations encountered both within his family life and in the workplace. He appears receptive to constructive challenges and demonstrates an ability to reflect on and apply learning from sessions. Thomas has four remaining sessions to complete before concluding the programme; however, it has been clearly expressed that he is motivated to continue developing his understanding and skills in order to establish a healthy co-parenting relationship with his ex-wife and to become a positive role model for his children.

At the commencement of the programme in May, Thomas's children were subject to a Child Protection Plan under Children's Services. This has recently been stepped down to a Child in Need Plan, reflecting the positive progress Thomas has made since engaging with the programme. As a result, he has been afforded increased contact with his children, an area in which he previously experienced significant difficulty. This progression has also provided opportunities for Thomas to actively implement the skills learned through the programme in his interactions with both his ex-wife and children, which he has demonstrated a strong willingness to do.